



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

### INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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#### ALASKA HERRING INDUSTRY IMPROVES

Government management of the Southeastern Alaska herring fishery started in 1940, has resulted in substantial improvement in the industry.

Statistics released today by the Fish and Wildlife Service reveal that Southeast Alaska's controlled catch for 1948, 400,000 barrels (weighing 250 lbs. each), is twice the catch recorded in 1939, when uncontrolled herring landings were so low that 14 of Southeastern Alaska's 18 herring reduction plants were forced out of business.

In 1940, after several years of exceptionally low herring catches, the Fish and Wildlife Service prohibited herring fishing to preserve a spawning stock from which the depleted population might be rebuilt. Heavy overfishing and poor spawning success had seriously reduced a fishery that had once recorded catches of as high as 500,000 barrels in the 1920's.

The prohibition of herring fishing by the Government was continued through 1941 and 1942. In 1943, the fishery was reopened; the catch being restricted to 100,000 barrels.

Progressive increases were made in the controlled catches until this year's high quota was set. As a result of the controlled herring catches, which permit only the taking of a predetermined quota of fish, the abundance of herring has been restored in Southeastern Alaskan waters, according to C. Howard Baltzo, acting chief of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Branch of Alaska Fisheries.

Quotas are determined by scientific studies of the abundance of the age groups in each year's herring catch. Fish and Wildlife Service biologists, under the leadership of Larry N. Kolloen, investigate the herring schools on the open water to see the condition of the various year classes. The biologists are able to predict with considerable accuracy the number and age of the various classes within the stock of fish, and the number that can be safely caught during the next year.

While the Service can set the most favorable yield of herring each year by establishing the controlled catch quotas, they cannot guarantee that the commercial fishermen are going to take that many. Unknown physical factors can kill most of the young herring in one year.

Southeastern Alaskan waters are the chief herring producing area in the Territory. During the past 10 years, important fisheries have also been developed in Prince William Sound and in the waters surrounding Kodiak Island. To protect these new herring fisheries from the fate of the Southeast Alaska fishery, controlled catch quotas were first set by the Fish and Wildlife Service 10 years ago.

The 300,000 barrel quota for the Kodiak Island fishery in the current season has already been taken. The fishery is now working on an additional allotment of 60,000 barrels. Prince William Sound's 180,000 barrel quota for 1948 has nearly been reached.

Many of the large seine boats which fish for herring in Alaska during the summer months engage in the California pilchard fishery in the winter.

Only a small part of the Alaska herring catch is salted, pickled, or smoked as food. For the most part, it is reduced to meal (used as food for livestock) and oil (used in the manufacture of soap, leather, linoleum, and paint).

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